

SOCIETY

Ghatowar speaks at North East Festival



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Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Honourable Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, Shri Nabam Tuki, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunchal Pradesh, Shri O Ibobi Singh, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri Mukul Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Shri P. Chamling, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim, Hon'ble Members of Parliament from North East, other distinguished guests and friends, media persons, ladies & gentlemen. It is my privilege to be part of this august assembly witnessing a commendable task of spreading awareness about North East culture & tradition.

I appreciate the Trend MMS, the key organizers, for organizing such a gala event to showcase the cultural heritage and bringing the renowned artists from North East on a common platform to bring the brothers and sisters from North East closer to their counterparts in Delhi. It is my pleasure to observe the presence of icons from the region like Olympian Mary Kom, Actor Adil Hussain, Journalist Arnab Goswami etc. as a part of this event. The Trend MMS has organized many such events successfully many a times and instrumental in promoting social harmony and equality in North East.

It is heartening to note that an organizing committee with eminent personalities has been formed to organize this mega event.

I would like to inform you that Ministry of DoNER is committed to the holistic development of North Eastern Region through various centrally located projects. The development concerns of these States are pursued through their respective Five Year and Annual Plans as well as those of the Union Ministries and Central Agencies. In addition, projects of inter-State nature in the Region are funded through the North-Eastern Council (NEC), which has a separate additional budget for the purpose.

The North East has essentially depended on Central funding for their development needs. All the States in the NER are Special Category States whose Development Plans are centrally financed on the basis of 90% Grant and 10% Loan. Further, the Special Category States are allowed to use up to 20% of the Central Assistance for Non-plan expenditure. Despite the fact that the per-capita plan outlays of the NE States have, over a period of time, been considerably higher than the national average, the States still rank significantly below the national average in so far as the development of infrastructure is concerned. In terms of per-capita State Domestic Product or other development indices, such as Power, Length of Roads or number of Hospital Beds, the North-East ranks well below the national average. Though the literacy levels are higher than the national average, vocational training and entrepreneurial skills remain grey areas. Things in all the spheres are changing positively in the region but substantial efforts needs to be made consistently.

It is also heartening to note that the idea behind organizing this unique North East Festival is to highlight and showcase the rich cultural heritage, food habits, handloom handicraft and tourism potential of the North East to the National Capital and the nation at large.

I am happy to note that there will be an exclusive stall from Ministry of Women and Child Development for women empowerment, their safety and rights as there are many instances of violation of women rights, misbehavior, racial attack, especially towards girls from North-east in National Capital and other cities of India.

North East Region is one of the strategic regions of India with eight vibrant states each having distinct social, cultural ethos. The region provides exciting opportunities for Agro-horti business, food processing, tourism and handicrafts besides other economic opportunities.

North East India is receiving relatively less percentage of the total Tourist Arrivals in India. The flora and fauna of this region is regarded as one of the 7 most bio-diversified region of the world. The one-horn Rhino of Assam, Nawsynram, the wettest place on earth, classical dance of Manipur, the crafts of Tripura, the bamboo dance of Mizoram, the four century old Buddhist Monastery of Tawang and Kan chendzonga of Sikkim are few unique attractions that the North East has to offer to both Indian and Foreign Tourist. North East India has more than 550 varieties of orchids, which can be showcased to the world.

It is also heartening to note that the main focus of North East Festival – the first edition is tourism & culture, entrepreneurship. Various stakeholders of Tourism industry in the region like tour operators, State Governments, private players all coming together to promote the region.

This mega event would provide a platform to discuss on the critical issues faced by the region. The event has zeroed in a tag line “Connecting People, Celebrating life”. The Festival is aimed at building bridges with various communities of North East as well as to reach out to the people of India.

It gave me immense pleasure to know that the two day would showcase Eight (8) State Governments, their projects, investment potentials, Tour Operators Stall, Day Long Carnival of colourful tribal dance performers of North East, Ethnic Food Courts with North East Ethnic cuisine, Photography Exhibition, Painting Exhibition, evening cultural performance by top North East singers like Bollywood Singer Zubin Garg, Bhojpuri Singing queen Kalpana Patowary, MTV Asia Award winner Aloba Naga, Guru Reuban Masangwa, rock star Lou Majaw, Mami Varte etc.

I am sure that the two day event will provide a forum of effective interaction, discussions on various issues concerning North East like Look East Policy and Internal Security, B2B session on Tourism, a session on Entrepreneurship and Skill Development.

Entrepreneurship is on a lower scale in the North East. In this Festival, we are highlighting some successful Entrepreneurs across the region who have succeeded despite of difficult scenario.

oThis festival is people's own initiative and I am optimistic that this event would be regular phenomenon henceforth and I assure all kind of support from Ministry of DoNER to this kind of initiatives.

I am sure that the festival goes a long way to carry the noble purpose of the organizers to encourage and promote socio-cultural economic diversity of the region.

Thank you. Jai Hind.



(From the speech of Minister of State (IC) DONER Shri P S Ghatowar)



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